

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A ~~[[dry]]~~method for producing a mixture of an aggregate material ~~prepared by for molding a mold comprising~~ the steps of:

mixing aggregate materials, one or more kind of a water-soluble binder that is soluble by water at ambient temperatures, a lubricant and water, to make a mixture;

evaporating ~~[[the ]]~~moisture within said mixture during said mixing step such that said mixture is dried and has single-grain structures; and

~~wherein adding additional water is added to said dry mixture to form a molding material for molding a mold with said dry mixture.~~

2. (Currently Amended) A ~~[[dry]]~~method for producing a mixture of an aggregate material ~~prepared by for molding a mold comprising~~ the steps of:

mixing aggregate materials, one or more kind of a water-soluble binder that is soluble by water at ambient temperatures, a lubricant and water, to make a mixture;

evaporating ~~[[the ]]~~moisture within said mixture during said mixing step such that said mixture is dried and has single-grain structures;

adding additional water to said dry mixture;

stirring said dry mixture with said additional water to cause it to foam in order to form a molding material for molding a mold ~~with said dry mixture.~~

3. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material~~The method of as recited in claim 1 or 2, wherein said water-soluble binder is a polyvinyl

alcohol having a degree of hydrolysis from 80 mol% to 95 mol% or ~~[[its]]a derivative thereof[[;]]~~ or an  $\alpha$  starch or dextrin or ~~[[its]]a derivative thereof[[;]]~~ or both.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material~~The method as recited in any of claims 1, 2 and 3 of claim 1 or 2, wherein said mixture contains from 0.1 wt% to 5.0 wt% of said water-soluble binder based on the total weight of said aggregate ~~granular material~~.

5. (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) A ~~[[dry]]method for producing a~~ mixture of an aggregate material ~~prepared by for molding a mold comprising~~ the steps of:

mixing an aggregate granular material, a water-soluble binder that is soluble by water at an ambient temperature, a cross-linker that is capable of cross-linking with said water-soluble binder, a lubricant and water;

evaporating ~~[[the ]]~~moisture within said mixture during said mixing step to prevent the cross-linking reaction between said water-soluble binder and said cross-linker such that said mixture is dried and has single-grain structures;

adding additional water to said dry mixture; and

freezing said dry mixture with the additional water to maintain said single-grain structures in said mixture in order to form a molding material for molding a mold ~~with said dry mixture~~.

7. (Currently Amended) A ~~[[dry]]method for producing a~~ mixture of an aggregate material ~~prepared by for molding a mold comprising~~ the steps of:

mixing an aggregate granular material, a water-soluble binder that is soluble by water at an ambient temperature, a cross-linker that is capable of cross-linking with said water-soluble binder, a lubricant and water;

evaporating ~~[[the ]]~~moisture within said mixture during said mixing step to prevent the cross-linking reaction between said water-soluble binder and said cross-linker such that said mixture is dried and has single-grain structures;

adding additional water to said dry mixture; and

stirring said dry mixture with said additional water to cause it to foam in order to form a molding material for molding a mold ~~with said dry mixture.~~

8. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material~~The method of as recited in claim 6 or 7, wherein said water-soluble binder is a polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of hydrolysis from 80 mol% to 95 mol% or ~~[[its]]~~a derivative thereoff~~[[:]]~~ or an  $\alpha$  starch or dextrin or ~~[[its]]~~a derivative thereoff~~[[:]]~~ or both.

9. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material~~The method of as recited in claim 6 or 7, wherein said mixture contains from 0.1 wt% to 5.0 wt% of said water-soluble binder based on the total weight of said aggregate granular material.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material as recited in any of claims 6-10~~The method as recited in any of claims 6 to 9 of claim 6 or 7, wherein said water-soluble binder ~~or water-soluble binder solution~~ is selected from a carboxylic compound.

11. (Currently Amended) ~~A dry mixture of an aggregate material~~The method as recited in of claim 10, wherein said carboxylic compound is selected from the

group consisting of an oxalic acid, a maleic acid, a succinic acid, a citric acid, a butane-tetracarboxylic acid, a methyl vinyl ether-maleic anhydride copolymer, and an isobutylene-maleic anhydride copolymer.

12-25. (Cancelled).

26. (New) A method for producing a mixture of an aggregate material for molding a mold as recited in claims 1, 2, 6 or 7, wherein said lubricant is selected from the group consisting of liquid paraffin, calcium stearate, zinc stearate and magnesium stearate.

27. (New) A method for producing a mixture of an aggregate material for molding a mold as recited in claim 26, wherein the lubricant is calcium stearate in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.1 weight% based on the total weight of said aggregate material.